



AAP Interview: Jessica Hagedorn

Jessica Hagedorn is an acclaimed novelist and National Book Award nominee, as well as a poet, playwright, and screenwriter. She was born and raised in the Philippines, and moved to the United States in her teens. She is the author of three novels, Dream Jungle, The Gangster of Love, and Dogeaters, and of Danger and Beauty, a collection of selected poetry and short fiction. Hagedorn is also the editor of the first Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction.

Interview by:
Bryan Thao Worra
of the Asian
American Press

Asian American Press (AAP): So, how does it feel now that *Charlie Chan Is Dead 2* is finally out?

Jessica Hagedorn (JH): It has been ten years since the first anthology came out in 1993, and it is gratifying to see this second volume filled with many fine new writers who have come of age since the first edition was published.

AAP: How would you describe it to people thinking about picking it up?

JH: Pioneer writers such as Carlos Bulosan, Hisaye Yamamoto and Wakako Yamauchi, published alongside Monique Truong, Jhumpa Lahiri, R.Z. Linmark, Philip Huang, Akhil Sharma, Chang-rae Lee, Han Ong, Karl Taro Greenfeld and Ka Vang, just to name a few - a rich, diverse, and surprising collection of writers, I would say. . .

AAP: Do you foresee regularly updated editions of *Charlie Chan Is Dead* in the future?

JH: No.

AAP: How long have you been writing?

JH: I've been writing since I was a child.

AAP: What got you started in writing?

JH: A love of books and story-telling in all forms.



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AAP: What are some of your favorite themes to work with personally?

JH: Sex, race, class, power, spirituality - everything!

AAP: What has been your biggest challenge as a writer?

JH: To write as well as I can.

AAP: How has the Filipino community responded to your work?

JH: Their responses to my work have been varied: some love it, some hate it.

AAP: Has your family been supportive of your writing?

JH: Yup.

AAP: What do you look for most in your own writing?

JH: Fearlessness, clarity and passion.

AAP: Who are some of your favorite writers?

JH: Denis Johnson, J.M. Coetzee, Russell Banks, Robert Stone, Toni Morrison, Manuel Puig, Alma Guillermoprieto, Gabriel Garcia Marquez - that's just my current list, which keeps evolving.

AAP: Do you have any advice for younger writers?

JH: To be fearless and passionate. To tackle big ideas and let the world in. To empathize.